



# **BC GOVERNMENT CAUCUS**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Bi-Weekly Updates On BC Rail Partnership To Keep Public Informed, Say MLAs**

**Prince George** – The Ministry of Transportation will begin providing bi-weekly updates starting August 15<sup>th</sup> to keep residents up to date on the BC Rail partnership process, Prince George MLAs Shirley Bond and Pat Bell announced today.

“People have been telling us they want to be kept fully informed about the progress we are making on BC Rail,” says Bond. “There is clearly a need for factual information on why government has decided to enter into a partnership plan and what the expected benefits will be.”

Bond and Bell spoke with Transportation Minister Judith Reid earlier this week to determine how they could keep constituents informed on a regular basis. The bi-weekly bulletin will be sent to the media and will also be posted on the Ministry of Transportation web site, [www.gov.bc.ca/tran/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/tran/), as well as Bond’s ([www.shirleybondmla.bc.ca](http://www.shirleybondmla.bc.ca)) and Bell’s ([www.patbellmla.bc.ca](http://www.patbellmla.bc.ca)) MLA web sites.

“This issue has engaged the public interest right from the start and it’s important people have the correct information,” says Bell. “The Minister is well aware of people’s concerns around BC Rail and I’m pleased we were able to come up with a solution to help keep people informed about the progress we are making.”

“Bi-weekly updates on the BC Rail partnership process are an effective way to give people current facts and information on this very important issue,” says Reid. “I’m pleased to be able to work with the MLAs to set this bulletin up.”

Over the past 15 years, BC Rail has cost taxpayers more than \$1.3 billion. On top of this, the company is faced with a shrinking client base, as evidenced by the recent loss of northeast coal contracts.

“In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to get the number of box cars necessary from BC Rail to ship our products to their markets,” says Tom Boughner, general manager of Pope and Talbot’s Mackenzie operation. “The quality of service has to improve significantly and we need to see an improvement of service and heightened awareness of customer needs.”

Reid says entering into a partnership will guarantee the capital investment necessary to ensure the long-term economic viability of the railway, and will help get shippers’ products to market faster. This will strengthen the rail industry, which will help provide long-term and sustainable jobs.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, the government announced that four firms have been short listed to operate BC Rail. The four are now expected to conduct further due diligence, which may include railway inspections, facility

tours and BC Rail management presentations. This process will likely result in further detailed proposals being submitted to the evaluation committee. The committee will then review and evaluate the submissions against terms of the RFP with the objective of recommending to government a proponent for final negotiations in early fall.

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